

Child Abuse: The Indian context of Bullying

Vasu Yadav and Aman Kachroo are not just names; these are the unheard voices of children waiting to be heard. Guilt, sorrow, grief can't return their lives and pacify their loved ones for their loss.

1 out of 3 children is bullied in some way or other. Aren't you?

In India, bullying is not considered what it is. It is masked by the facade of joy, hobby and fun activity to school for college going children to pass their free time. Bullying is a behavior that hurts someone else. The hurting weapon can be name-calling, teasing, hitting, punishing, forcing to do something, spreading rumors, breaching privacy, abusing, threatening, humiliating, etc.

Sometimes, children or adults bully at schools, restrooms, boarding schools, and college hostels, at home, at online platforms. This time pass activities for someone can lead to physical, emotional, psychological lifetime trauma for others. Many times, it crosses the boundary of trauma to life-threatening actions like suicide or death.

In the past two decades, the world has gone through many developmental actions, and digital platforms took many turns into it. Online games and social media platforms added new breeding spaces for bullying. In India cyberbullying cases have increased many folds within the last decade and are on rise with every passing day. Sending threatening messages, sharing embarrassing images or videos, trolling, sex chats, engaging children in sexual conversations, encouraging young people to self-harm are different ways of cyberbullying. This affects the child psychologically and leads to depression and anxiety.

India ranks third in the list of online bullying cases as per the survey conducted by Microsoft in 2012 in 25 countries. Girls are more susceptible to cyberbullying as compared to boys. The victims are also prone to committing suicide after being bullied.

Some signs of bullying are-

- ✓ Physical injuries such as unexplained bruises;
- ✓ Being afraid to go to school;
- ✓ Asking for or stealing money;
- ✓ Damaged belongings;
- ✓ Frequent fights and anger;
- ✓ Avoiding person or group discussions;
- ✓ Being nervous, losing confidence, becoming distressed;
- ✓ Problem with eating or sleeping.



There are many serious effects of bullying, the child becomes weak in self-esteem, loses self-confidence and resists making friends. The child often isolates themselves and remains secluded as they cannot build lasting friendships or relationships and it might continue to their adulthood.

Breaking the silence is hard for a child in such situations but is essential.

Help from parents and elders can be of great comfort for the child.

Following actions can be taken in providing help to a child in these cases:

Talking to children about bullying and asking them to share their daily routines can play an important part in understanding the course of their everyday activities and identifying their daily routine.

Giving them time to tell their stories instead of interrogating them is yet another important aspect.

Taking bullying seriously and taking immediate action against it.

Reporting bullying is vital to save others from it.

The government of India has enacted a regulation called: UGC Regulations and Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Education Institutions, 2009. But this is only applied to all the colleges and higher education institutions. This law does not apply to schools. For schools, the former HRD minister has generated the guidelines for all affiliated schools:

1. Form a committee: deals with the case of bullying and ragging;
2. Ragging in school: Students will be given a written warning and can lead to the rustication of the student.
3. School notice board: a warning to students of strict action, if anyone found bullying someone
4. Committee members: it should include vice-principal, a senior teacher, doctor, counselor, parent-teacher representative, school management representative, legal representative, and peer educators



Unfortunately, nobody in India has watchful eyes over schools to oversee and examine to what extent these guidelines are being followed. There is no law in India pertaining to cyberbullying. We as adults should take steps to stop bullying and make educational spaces safe for children.

“The beginning can’t be traced but the end can be achieved by conscious efforts”.

Reference:

- Dharni Aishwani, Cases of bullying in India. March 28, 2019.
- Ghosh Sudip, Anti-bullying in India for schools, colleges and cyber world. December 14, 2016.
- Shalini Swati, what is cyber bullying as anti-bullying laws in India. September 20, 2019.

Mumuksha Porwal

Intern, Anthropos India Foundation